DATE: April 11, 2006

TO: School Food Authority Administrators

FROM: Christine Emerson, Director, School Nutrition Programs

SUBJECT: Military Families and Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs

The current policy on pages 32-33 of the *Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual*, issued in August 2001, states that household members who are ***temporarily absent*** from their household are to be considered household members, and their income is included with other household income when making an eligibility determination. Household members not living with the household for an ***extended period of time*** or ***living overseas*** are not included as members of the household for eligibility purposes, and only that portion of their income made available by them or on their behalf to the household is counted as income to the household.

Until further notice, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is continuing an **exception** to the current policy on determining household income and size for deployed service members of Operation Enduring Freedom/Noble Eagle and all similar military deployments. For the purpose of determining household size, the deployed service members should be considered family members living apart on a temporary basis and considered a household member. However, only that portion of their income made available by them or on their behalf to the household should be counted as income to the household.

Schools are to instruct families completing their meal benefit forms to include the names and that portion of income of deployed service members made available to the household. The determining official shall count the service member as part of the household in establishing a child's eligibility for free and reduced-price meals.

If there are any questions concerning this policy, please contact School Nutrition Programs at (406) 444-2501.

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